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Hindus in Kolkata**

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Abstract

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Keywords

Family, Values, Cultural, Continuity, among, Displaced, East, Bengal, Hindus, Kolkata

Disciplines

Business | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

Khan, G. & Chowdhury, M. K. (2007). Family Values and Cultural Continuity among the Displaced East Bengal Hindus in Kolkata. *International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations*, 6 (6), 1-16.

Family Values and Cultural Continuity among the Displaced East Bengal Hindus in Kolkata

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Abstract: In the process of resettlement in Kolkata, the East Bengal (EB) Hindu 'refugee-migrants' initiated some strategic plans for their unity. These plans were reflected in their attitudes of retaining family values, marriage practices and distinct cultural boundaries. EB Hindus known as "Bangal" tended to maintain such distinctive attitudes because they could not easily socialise and adjust themselves with the local people of West Bengal (WB) known as "Ghoti". Initially, the EB Hindus felt threatened by maintaining distinct cultural values and supremacy primarily for their unsettled status. Even after a stay of over 30 years in Kolkata, most EB Hindus could not consider India as their permanent home. Neither the EB migrants took positive steps for their social adjustment with the WB society, nor did the WB locals extend their support for the migrants' socialisation process.

Keywords: Refugee-Migrants, Family Values, Bangal-Ghoti, Cultural Boundary and Socialisation Process

Introduction

THE SECOND PARTITION of Bengal in 1947 caused a massive Hindu migration from East Bengal (EB) to West Bengal (WB), Kolkata. As a result, a new phase of communal categorisation emerged within EB Hindu refugee-migrant (*Bangal*) and WB local Hindu (*Ghoti*) in Kolkata against the usual Hindu-Muslim communal rivalry in Bengal (Khan 2006).

The objective of this paper is to analyse the EB Hindu refugee-migrants' tendency of maintaining typical family norms and continuity of their EB cultural traits amidst WB local culture in Kolkata. With the passage of time, however, the changing family values and marriage practices that are observed in both EB and WB Hindu communities will be discussed for an understanding of contemporary cultural trend and family relations. Thus far, no in-depth analysis in this area has been carried out.

At the outset, a theoretical discussion will consider the symbolic construction of community and maintenance of boundary in the *Bangal-Ghoti*¹ nexus. The main focus of relationship will be on the distinguishable features of cultural practices between the migrants and the local populace. Here, cultural practices considered are precisely centered on family lives, marriage patterns, religious festivals and allied societal rituals. The structure of this paper is as follows: Section II contains a theoretical discussion on

the symbolic construction of community and retention of cultural boundary. In Section III we shall identify the differing attitudes and perceptions between EB and WB Hindus. Section IV highlights the distinct cultural identity of EB Hindus. Section V discusses the variation in religious and socio-cultural practices between *Bangals* and *Ghotis*. In Section VI, family structure and composition of the EB and WB Hindus are compared and contrasted. Section VII scrutinizes the various aspects of conformity and contradiction between EB and WB Hindus. Finally, Section VIII contains a summary of this study.

The analysis of this paper is fundamentally based on extensive fieldwork upon EB Hindu refugee-migrants and local WB Hindus. Fieldwork was carried out in two stages in south Kolkata for a period of eleven months (2000-2001, 2004) on randomly selected EB Hindu migrant families and purposively selected WB Hindu families. The fieldwork comprised of participant-observation, in-depth interviewing, informal group discussions and key informants sources.

II Symbolic Construction of Community and Maintenance of Boundary: A Theoretical Perspective

The considerable extent of politicisation towards regional differences produces conflicting relationships. In assessing the dynamics of *Ghoti-Bangal* relation-

¹ In Kolkata, the EB Hindus (popularly known as "*Bangals*") encountered problems of cultural differences with the WB Hindus (known as "*Ghotis*"). These two indigenous nomenclatures denote the basic characteristics of East Bengalis as "*Bangal*" and West Bengalis as "*Ghoti*" based on their separate geographic locations, use of distinctive dialects and overall distinguishable habits and attitudes in almost all spheres of lives.



ships, their cultural differences, attitude of mutual exclusiveness, retention of separate identity and maintenance of symbolic or real boundary, the theoretical viewpoint of Cohen (1985:12-21, 29-53) may be appreciated. Cohen (1985:12) in his theoretical explanation of the symbolic construction of community and maintenance of boundaries stated that the word “ ‘Community’ seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference”.

In analysing the relationship between *Ghotis* and *Bangals* in Kolkata, the notion of both similarity and difference applies to these communities. They are similar with respect to language and religion but they are different in their regional identification and cultural practices. However, it is necessary to explore the development of theory around community, and the significance of the maintenance of boundaries by each community.

Generally, the term ‘community’ is understood as the relationship between people who have common interests focussed on a closer and harmonious bonding. An early conceptualisation of community emerged in 1915, where Galpin spoke of the rural communities’ trade and service areas surrounding a village (Harper and Dunham 1959: 19). A number of definitions on community followed after this; some focussed on community as a geographical area, some on a group of people living in a particular place, and still others consider community as an area of common life. Beyond this, it is also emphasised that there are other issues around community, which appear as political discourses (Smith 2001). However as a basis, one can explore community in three different ways: firstly, the ‘place’ as territorial or geographical location; secondly, the ‘interest’ as sharing common interests other than place, i.e., religious beliefs like Catholic community, Muslim community or Hindu community and/or sociology of identity etc., and thirdly, ‘spirit of community’ which signifies a strong sense of attachment to a place or ideas. The latter relates to the idea of spiritual beliefs and practices, like the spiritual union between the Christians and the Christ (Crow and Allan 1994; Hoggett 1997; Lee and Newby 1983; and Willmott 1986, 1989).

These definitions emphasised (1) location, (2) sharing of interests and (3) sense of attachment to place or idea. Taking into account the cohesiveness and distinctiveness of the community bonds and separate identity of EB Hindu refugee-migrants and WB local Hindus, it would be quite plausible to consider the theoretical contribution of Cohen (1985). Cohen (1985:12) taking a different approach, defined community as:

...a relational idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities. Indeed, it will be argued that the use of the word is only occasioned by the desire or need to express such a distinction.

The EB Hindu refugee-migrants in Kolkata, as a distinct community, appeared to be hostile to the local WB Hindu community with their separate social entities and attitudes. Similar types of differences are observed among the local WB Hindus. Thus, the way the EB migrants and WB permanent settlers describe and indicate their distinctiveness from each other, can be noted as a significant theoretical linkage.

The moot question is whether both the communities, in fact, desire or need to express their differences in the social situations that are prevalent in *Jadavpur-Bijoygarh ‘JabarDakhal Udbastu’*² colonies and in the surrounding locations. If they do, how frequently do they need to or desire to express their feelings of differences? The intensity of their urge of dividing themselves off can be interpreted as a viable theoretical frame of symbolic construction of community and maintenance of boundaries in between communities.

Cohen’s (1982; 1985) argument on symbolic construction of community leads to belongingness and attachment of people to their own community and social environment. Community, therefore, plays an important symbolic role in generating people’s sense of belonging (Crow and Allan 1994) and attachment. Cohen also emphasised that “people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity” (1985:118). This proposition of Cohen (1985) in regard to symbolic aspect of community formation, clarifies people’s cultural homogeneity in their communities and sense of separate identity in contrasting with other communities and cultures. This form of reasoning can be applied to the situations of the EB Hindu migrants in Kolkata, since they tend to continue their own *Bangal* cultural homogeneity and separate regional identity while living within the WB *Ghoti* cultures.

Apart from cultural distinctions and regional identities, differences between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* are related to basic division of class, caste, endogamous and exogamous family and kinship ties. A conflicting relationship arises because of their differing notions and attitude towards life, viz., one being unsettled migrants and the other being settled permanent residents (Khan 2006). In understanding the changing nature of social relationships and interactions in both among the EB Hindu refugee-migrants

² Creation of colonies by the EB Hindu refugee-migrants by forcibly occupying private and public lands in the *Jadavpur-Bijoygarh* area of south Kolkata were also known as *JabarDakhal Udbastu* colonies.

and among the WB local Hindus, the cultural and attitudinal differences can be assessed based on informants' statements, in-depth interviewing and participant observation during field survey. This social dynamics is subject to further inquiry in the arena of symbolic boundary maintenance. As Cohen (1985:12-15) illustrated:

...boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction...We are talking here about what the boundary means to people, or, more precisely, about the meanings they give to it. This is the symbolic aspect of community boundary.

In other words, the community may be seen as:

...a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction.

In the context of marriage, family, kinship and associated cultural traits and rituals within these institutional structures, both *Ghotis* and *Bangals* have their separate communal boundary.

Differing Attitudes and Perceptions between EB and WB Hindus

Attitudes and perceptions of one community to another are generally sensed as in-group and out-group biases, a sort of 'us and them' or 'we and they' feeling of differences. Two communities, while living together in the same place or social environment can be stranger to each other and hence find it difficult to accept one another on cultural issues (Arantes 1996; Laing 1967). This attitude of maintaining communal and/or cultural boundaries makes them think that they are different from one another.

Before the partition of Bengal, observed contradictory relationships between the people of EB Hindus and the people of WB Hindus remained subdued due to a limited conflict of economic interests. However, the sense of divisiveness and maintenance of cultural boundaries between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* surfaced after the *Bangals* started to live with *Ghotis* in Kolkata permanently.

In order to illustrate the sense of cultural differences and construction of communal boundaries

between *Bangals* and *Ghotis*, it is useful to describe the distinguishable attitudes and expressions as each is viewed by the other. Based on our observation and informal discussions with *Bangals* and *Ghotis* in the sample locations, we observed that both communities tend to distinguish themselves from one another mainly on socio-cultural basis. However, the extent of their differences can be ascertained from the subsequent descriptions and interviews.

As mentioned earlier that the *Bangal-Ghoti* attitudinal differences existed even before the partition of Bengal. Mohitlal Majumdar's (Professor of literature at Dacca University who originally came from West Bengal) correspondence with Nirad C. Chaudhury (a journalist and author who originally came from East Bengal) aptly expresses the attitudinal difference between *Bangals* and *Ghotis*. The English translation of this correspondence is given below:

During holidays, I do not feel well since I have no contacts with the students. That is why I am writing to you. There is nothing much to do here and there is no person to talk to. The few people I meet are purely East Bengalis. The essence of literature is taboo for them. East Bengal is the Scotland of Bengal; its nature is fundamentally different from us. Whether we make fun of them or we criticise each other, there is a real distinction in nature and type; therefore, we should agree to differ than to be united. I have lived here long enough to realize that not a single person, young or old or any student are interested in literature. People here are too literal in all matters. I have never found such stark materialists...all that I say is about men. I do not know much about women. I think they are more hard working and intelligent than our women (West Bengalis) although they (East Bengalis) lack a bit of politeness. The family structure here is mostly joint-family, and has extended cohesiveness of human emotions in them. They are not weak, they are strong. They are expert in nursing and caring for people, but I do not know, maybe, they are not as devoted as our women who care for their husbands only... (Majumdar 1940: 349-352).

The above expression aptly describes the nature of *Bangal-Ghoti* differences in pre-partition Bengal. Majumdar being a *Ghoti* from WB, living in EB described his observation on the differences between *Bangals* and *Ghotis*. Therefore, notwithstanding the case of formal migration, there had been a long display of differences in social interactions and relationships between *Ghoti* and *Bangal*. Such relationship became more formalised and interest-oriented with the political partition of Bengal in 1947. As a result, EB Hindus' involuntary migration and their settle-

ment in south Kolkata aggravated the *Bangal-Ghoti* conflicts.

The following discussion describes the attitudes of EB Hindu migrants towards WB local Hindus and vice versa. The field interview data are used to explain the nature and extent of relationships and differences between the two groups.

While expressing the conflicting relationships between migrants and local West Bengalis, Arun Goswami, an early EB migrant (1946-1947) bluntly said:

Ghoti and Bangal are two different cultural communities regardless of Hindus or Muslims. Their distinctiveness will remain forever. After a long struggle of resettlement in West Bengal and interacting with the local people in economic, political, social and cultural activities, I must conclude, it is unlikely that the South Pole and the North Pole will ever meet (Interview: 2001).

Another EB migrant Nirmal Das's statement can be used to understand the perception of EB migrants towards WB *Ghoti*:

Ghotis hide their true feelings by use of sweet and clever words. They have dirty minds. They are jealous of Bangal's materialistic attitude and straightforwardness. They only know and have learnt how to take advantage for their self-interest by all means. Despite (so-called) aristocratic background, they are expert in flattery and cajolement for achieving their desired goal. They are never cooperative and helpful. They only understand their own business and nothing else (Interview: 2000).

It is evident from the above statements that the local WB Hindus were self-centred, less supportive and were reluctant to negotiate and compromise with anything that benefits the EB Hindu migrants.

In contrast to *Bangal's* viewpoints and attitudes towards *Ghoti*, the views of WB local (*Ghoti*) is presented here for understanding their attitudes towards EB migrants (*Bangal*). Dr. Geeta Chatterjee, a local WB Hindu disclosed the facts about East Bengalis:

Criminal activities increased and bad politics developed in West Bengal due to the influx of refugee migrants from EB. I had bad experience working with different types of professionals from EB, particularly in public health services. Once one Bangal doctor worked with me in a medical centre who also worked as a consultant in another health organisation simultan-

eously. One day the Bangal doctor reported to me that his name was included in that health organisation and that if he would simply visit there twice a week for one hour each day and signed the papers, he would receive a good amount of money. The whole act appeared to me as immoral and criminal (Interview: 2000).

The fieldwork data on the attitudinal differences (expressed as negative aspects only) between EB migrants and WB local residents are reflected in all walks of their lives. The summary of what *Bangal* thinks about a *Ghoti* and what a *Ghoti* thinks about a *Bangal* is presented below.

West Bengalis regard '*Bangal*' as rustic, uneducated, uncultured and corrupt. *Bangals* cannot speak and pronounce Bengali language correctly. Conversely, the East Bengalis think of '*Ghoti*' as lazy, crazy, miserly, unsociable, snobbish, having peculiar food habits and maintaining false vanity.

Attitudinal differences between EB Hindu migrants and WB local Hindus towards each other are more pronounced among older age groups compared with younger groups. The older EB Hindu refugee-migrants, who were in the age groups of 5 to 20 years at the time of migration (at present, they generally fall into the age bracket of around 55 to 70), were able to recollect memories and reminisce about their EB parent house. They have strong roots and nostalgic feelings for their EB birthplace (now Bangladesh). The older EB migrants and their counterpart, WB locals are relatively stubborn in maintaining the ever-contrasting *Bangal-Ghoti* relationship between them. Such feeling of different cultures developed out of status consciousness of EB Hindu migrants and WB local Hindus. The awareness of regional status among both communities gradually formed the basis for continuing their distinct cultural practices.

Cultural Identity of EB Hindus and Transition to Adjustment

In order to elucidate the cultural differences and construction of communal boundaries, it is necessary to discuss the adjustment made by the EB migrants with respect to language, marriage and religious practices during the process of their settlement. The extent of adjustment required on social and cultural practices by EB migrants is shown in Table 1. The respondents were questioned on eight indicators reflecting to 'what extent they required adjustment of socio-cultural practices'. The responses were categorised under three broad headings, such as: 'not at all', 'partially' and 'completely'.

Table 1: Cultural Distinctiveness, Adaptability and Social Recognition of EB Migrants N=32

| Extent of adjustment required | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Socio-cultural practices ¹ | Not at all % | Partially % | Completely % |
| Distinct dialect or language | 0 (0) | 53.12 (17) | 46.88 (15) |
| Distinguishable marriage practices | 6.25 (2) | 65.63 (21) | 28.12 (09) |
| Different food habit | 3.13 (1) | 65.63 (21) | 31.24 (10) |
| Difference in the use of clothes and dresses | 12.50 (4) | 81.25 (26) | 6.25 (02) |
| Variations in Puja performances | 9.38 (3) | 90.62 (29) | 0 (0) |
| Claims of cultural refinements and supremacy by West Bengalese | 3.13 (1) | 18.75 (06) | 78.12 (25) |
| Attitudinal problems | 3.13 (1) | 28.12 (09) | 68.75 (22) |
| Problems of socialisation and social acceptance | 6.25 (2) | 18.75 (06) | 75.00 (24) |
| Note: Figures in parentheses represent number of cases. | | | |

¹ Source: Field-study on Involuntary migration of EB Hindus and their resettlement in Kolkata: (2000-2001).

Table 1 shows that majority of EB Hindu refugee-migrants required partial adjustment with regard to marriage practices (65.63%), food habit (65.63%), use of clothes and dresses (81.25%) and puja performances (90.62%). They also required partial adjustment of their dialect and language usage when communicating with WB locals. A relatively higher rate of adjustment (completely) is needed in regard to the 'sense of cultural refinements and attitudes of supremacy' (78.12%), 'problems of socialisation and social acceptance' (75%) and overall 'attitudinal problems of adjustment' between two groups of people (68.75%). This table clearly shows that EB Hindu refugee-migrants encountered major problems with socialisation due to lack of social recognition by WB local Hindus. Hence, the EB Hindu migrants' adjustment process was prolonged because of the purported cultural supremacy of the WB local Hindus.

In the course of their resettlement, the EB Hindu refugee-migrants tended to adjust to the patterns of the WB local Hindus in regard to socialisation, attitude and culture. Though the EB Hindu migrants

progressively adjusted to patterns of life of the WB Hindus over the years, their cultural distinctiveness in the context of marriage practices, family patterns, religious rituals and norms remained unaltered for a longer period.

(i) Matrimonial Contracts

In matrimonial contracts, the marriage practices among the EB Hindu migrants reflect a sense of cultural distinctiveness with that of the WB local Hindus. This has developed out of their migratory status as well as their instinctive attitudes of maintaining regional cultural boundaries. The extent to which the EB Hindu refugee-migrants tended to retain their regional boundary and district identities in instituting a matrimonial contract, has been analysed using structured statements which are shown in Table 2. Table 2 shows that almost every migrant in the sample agreed that most marriages in migrant families took place on a regional and/or district identity basis (96.87%).

Table 2: EB Hindus' Statements on Retention of Regional Distinctiveness in Matrimonial Contracts N=32

| Statements ¹ | Disagree % | Agree % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| In migrant families, marriages take place on regional/district identity basis | 3.13 (1) | 96.87 (31) |
| Brides are matched sometimes beyond the regional/district boundary | 21.87 (7) | 78.13 (25) |
| Grooms scarcely marry outside their own region or locality | 87.50 (28) | 12.50 (4) |
| Economic factors overrule rigid regional or district identity issues | 0 (0) | 100.00 (32) |
| For marriages, most migrants are in favour of their own region and community | 6.25 (2) | 93.75 (30) |
| Note: Figures in parentheses represent number of cases. | | |

¹ Source: Field-study on Involuntary migration of EB Hindus and their resettlement in Kolkata: (2000-2001).

Also for marriages, most migrants preferred their own region and community (93.75%). It was found that brides were sometimes matched beyond their regional and district identities (78.13%) and in case of EB grooms, an overwhelming majority of them (87.50%) disagreed with the statement 'grooms scarcely marry outside their own region or locality'. For EB migrants, however, economic factors totally overrule rigid regional or district identity issue in selecting both brides and grooms. Nevertheless, some cultural issues of differences are considered by both EB and WB people.

The sustenance of rigid regional identity of *Bangal* community in social spheres, particularly in regard to matrimonial arrangements made them so parochial and polarised that they were constantly subjected to criticism by the *Ghotis*. Even the *Ghotis* claimed that they have developed a similar kind of parochialism to the *Bangals* since their migration to Kolkata.

(ii) A Comparative Assessment of Matrimonial Contracts among EB Migrants and WB Locals

Apart from obtaining the sample respondents' diverse opinions on marriages, a content analysis technique was utilised in order to supplement the views of the study population. The basis of matrimonial contracts among the Bengali Hindus in Kolkata (both EB and WB) was the subject-matter of content analysis. The following illustrations of Bengali Hindu matrimonial arrangements help an understanding of differences in selection of brides and grooms of both EB migrants and WB locals.

The Bengali Hindu matrimonial contracts in Kolkata primarily depended on advertisements in

newspapers. Advertisements on matrimonial contracts appear in large numbers in the weekend Sunday edition (called '*Rabibashorio*') of '*Ananda Bazar Patrika*' (ABP), the highest circulated Bengali newspaper in West Bengal. In order to assess the variability of marriage deals between *Bangals* and *Ghotis*, we have collected all matrimonial advertisements that appeared in *Ananda Bazar Patrika* of Kolkata for the period covering late October 2000 to mid-February 2001. This period is considered as the peak season⁵ for matrimonial contracts. In these matrimonial advertisements, the basis of Bengali Hindu marriages is focused on by the description of the desired partner. The varied nature of advertisements, however, needs interpretations relating to specificities of matrimonial contracts that indicate regional and cultural differences between East Bengalis and West Bengalis in Kolkata.

As observed, a greater extent of matrimonial advertisements illustrates both a sense of comparability and a state of variability between EB and WB cultures. The basic criteria for selecting brides and grooms for both EB and WB are almost similar. However, regional preference plays a vital role in marriage contract among EB and WB Hindus. This has been ascertained from checking and editing the content and volumes of advertisements in which the basic criteria for selecting brides and grooms are clearly stated. A brief account of the basic criteria for both brides and grooms is furnished here. According to matrimonial advertisements, a bride needs to fulfill as far as possible, the following basic selection criteria:

Fair complexion, good looking, tall stature, beautiful, slim, graduate and above, working,

⁵ The time span between the end of monsoon and the beginning of harvest in Bengal is propitious for marriage ceremonies.

expert in housework, attractive hair, homely, singer; knows art and painting; knows stitching and embroidery etc.

Likewise, the bridegroom needs to fulfill as far as possible, the following basic selection criteria:

Handsome, tall, good health (no chronic illness), educated and qualified, professional either Doctor or Engineer or Government service or established businessman or Bank officer or any good job i.e., stable earner or College teacher; own home in Kolkata etc.

It appeared from these advertised basic criteria that many prospective brides and grooms would not fit

into and/or meet the selection requirements. For example, all brides may not be tall, beautiful and slim but may be otherwise adequate. Similarly, all grooms may not be handsome and have owned a home in Kolkata but certainly many of them may be accepted as a better candidate for good reasons like morals, diligence and sincerity etc. The basic selection criteria remain the same for both EB migrants and WB locals. However, they differ in terms of regional and/or district identity and caste preferences. Table 3 shows the comparative basis of selecting Hindu brides and grooms for EB migrants and WB locals. Differences in preferences in selecting brides and grooms among EB migrants and WB locals are documented in Table 3.

Table 3: Matrimonial Advertisements in Selecting Brides and Grooms N* = 7918

| Basis of Selection ¹ | East Bengal | West Bengal | Non-response ² |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Prefer regional identity | 51.93 (4112) | 37.80 (2993) | 9.00 (713) |
| Prefer high education | 56.86 (4502) | 43.14 (3416) | 0 |
| Prefer economic solvency | 48.28 (3823) | 51.72 (4095) | 0 |
| Preference for material gains | 52.08 (4124) | 47.92 (3794) | 0 |
| Prefer district Identity | 43.31 (3429) | 12.89 (1021) | 43.80 (3468) |
| Flexible on caste identity | 28.73 (2275) | 21.33 (1689) | 49.94 (3954) |
| Regional flexibility for wealth & education. | 10.95 (867) | 9.46 (749) | 79.59 (6302) |
| Prefer same caste group | 8.63 (683) | 10.68 (846) | 80.44 (6369) |
| Consider overseas proposal | 6.71 (531) | 3.13 (248) | 90.16 (7139) |
| Note: Figures in the parenthesis represent number of cases. | | | |

¹ Source: Matrimonial Advertisement in 'Ananda Bazar Patrika', late October 2000-mid-February 2001 (all Sundays).

² Excludes Muslim/Christian and limited non-Bengali advertisements.

Apart from the basic selection criteria for brides and grooms (as discussed above), the basis of selection is grouped into nine possible categories idealised from within the advertisements. Table 3 shows the comparative basis of selecting brides and grooms by EB migrants and WB locals. As envisaged in the advertisement, the preferences of selection mainly emphasised (1) regional identity, (2) higher education, (3) economic solvency and (4) preference for material gains.

The EB migrants are more likely to prefer brides and grooms from the same region (51.93%) and the same district (43.31%) as well. It appears that the preference for same district identity in selecting brides and grooms is much greater among the EB Hindus (more than three times) compared to WB locals. District identity is an important issue for the migrants, not for the locals where the WB Hindus emphasise economic solvency of brides and grooms (52%) rather than regional/district identities. There-

fore, the broad geographic or regional identification alone does not tend to distinguish EB and WB characteristics towards matrimonial affairs. The EB Hindus' attitude of insisting upon the district identities can be viewed in the first place, as a consequence of the complex and harsh resettlement process they encountered in southern Kolkata.

With reference to the contents of newspaper advertisement, the nature of matrimonial contracts among the Bengali Hindus in Kolkata indicated a clear-cut distinction between the EB migrants and WB locals in selecting their brides and grooms. The distinctive attitudes of both groups are represented in almost all advertisements either directly or indirectly. Reviews of matrimonial advertisements show that both *Bangals* and *Ghotis* are to a great extent literally mulish and inflexible at least with respect to regional identifications. Living together for more than 50 years, both *Bangal* and *Ghoti* tended to retain

their distinct cultures, which are reflected in their attitudes of 'distinctiveness'.

Both EB Hindu refugee-migrants and WB local Hindus consider economic solvency and higher education issues in the matrimonial contracts. Table 3 shows that WB local Hindus emphasise economic solvency more (51.72%) than higher education (43.14%). On the other hand, EB Hindus prefer higher education (56.86%) to economic stability (48%). EB Hindu refugee-migrants are more likely to be flexible on caste identity (28.73%) compared to their WB local counterparts (21.33%). Taking into account the specific preferences in marriage deals (in varying degrees), both communities are concerned about the economic strength and higher educational attainments in order to promote a better family life. Caste identity and preference for same cast group in selecting brides and grooms were insignificant due to a high non-response rate. Also, higher non-response rates were found in regional flexibility for wealth and education and overseas proposal.

Similar findings to those of the content analysis were identified through field interview. In regard to marriage preferences including the district identity, regional identity, and caste identity or caste-matching, the EB migrants generally opted for the regional identity and were less interested in caste-matching. In Kolkata, unlike the WB local Hindus, the EB Hindus preferred the brides with relatively higher education. This was due to the lack of availability of higher educated grooms from the same regional and/or district background. Here the case of M.C. Pal and Lalita Kundu's marriage is one of the examples that can be mentioned. They were of similar caste backgrounds and had same regional and district identities (Dhaka district), and hence the question of cultural maladjustment did not arise. But the preference for higher educational attainment came into prominence as Lalita Kundu stated. She said:

I am academically more qualified than my husband, which initially created some problem of mental adjustment in the family. But for a spirit of oneness to normative aspects of the joint-family system, we overcame the problem of maladjustment. Therefore, I did not care for individuality or superiority complex (Interview: 2000).

Educated brides are in high demand among EB migrants in Kolkata mainly for economic reasons while the caste-matching factor is found important especially for the WB local Hindus. In this context, a WB local Hindu's strong adherence to caste-matching in matrimonial contract can be noted. Abinash Biswas said:

No doubt money is important for a better living. But economic factor cannot supersede Hindus' inborn caste pride. We believe marriage as a life long partnership and it has an implication for future generation. Therefore, we must consider caste-matching practice always as a priority in matrimonial contracts for continuation of our Hindu cultural heritage, social dignity and status consciousness (Interview: 2001).

The retention of regional identity in matrimonial contract by EB Hindu refugee-migrants can be seen in the following illustration obtained from the field-work:

As the eldest brother in the family and also as the leader of the joint-family, M.C. Pal from Dhaka district took initiative and arranged marriages for his two younger brothers (G. C. Pal and P.C. Pal) since their father suddenly died. It is a social custom in joint-families that the eldest son has to take major responsibilities in familial affairs after the demise of parents unless he has a serious disability of any kind. Both G. C. Pal and P.C. Pal have established their marital contracts with brides who migrated from East Bengal only. G.C. Pal's wife came from Mymensingh district while P. C. Pal's wife originally came from Sylhet district. They could not retain their district identity but were able to maintain their regional identity.

Discussion on the matrimonial contracts among EB Hindu refugee-migrants and WB local Hindus through content analysis and fieldwork reveal that these two groups of Hindus substantially differ from one another. However, lesser differences are found between the two groups in regard to their preference for economic solvency and material gains. Hence, the overall analysis of Table 3 makes it clear the inherent contradiction and limited level of conformity between the EB Hindu refugee-migrants and the WB local Hindus.

(iii) Differences in Marriage Rituals Among Bangal and Ghoti

Differences can be observed between *Bangal* and *Ghoti* in marriage rituals, religious festivals and cultural aspects. Some specific marriage customs and cultures are discussed here to illustrate these differences. Data obtained from the field interview were used to analyse the differences in marriage customs and rituals.

Nitu Pal, Rupa Roy and Bonani Shaha differentiated cultures of East Bengal and West Bengal with respect to marriage customs, language, food habit and clothing. They specifically emphasise that the Hindu marriage ritual, 'Use of *Sidur* (a religious practice followed by a Hindu married woman) and *Bashi Be-A'* (second day of the formal marriage),

are observed in a different way by *Bangal* and *Ghoti* communities. An illustration, given by Nitu Pal, Rupa Roy and Bonani Shaha, was as follows:

A Hindu married woman must apply 'Sidur' (means vermilion) regularly on the mid-point of her hair close to the forehead. This practice of using Sidur will continue from the first or second day of the marriage till her husband remains alive. 'Bashi Be-A' means the second-day celebration of the marriage. Bangal Hindu married women begin to use Sidur from the Bashi Be-A while Ghoti Hindu women use Sidur from the first day of the marriage (Interview: 2000).

The concept of sexuality is attached to this ritual in the sense that after marriage, a woman no longer remains a virgin and must be distinctively identified as married marked by something with the colour of blood. But the use of *Sidur* among the *Ghotis* is observed on the first day of the marriage when the bride has had no sexual communion with her husband. *Bangals* observed the use of *Sidur* on the next day of marriage called *Bashi Be-A*, which they say is logical, because a bride can be marked as married only after the first night of sexual union with the groom. The couple might not have any sex on the first night of the marriage, but it would be assumed that they have, and therefore, the bride should use the *Sidur* on the *Bashi Be-A* only and not on the first day of the marriage.

The counter argument of the *Ghotis* in this regard is that so long as the '*Montra Path*' (recitation of religious verses) is done formally by the '*Thakur*' or '*Purohit*' (Hindu priest), they can be declared as married; then and there the bride should use *Sidur* as the mark of being married. *Ghotis* further argued that there was no reference in the religion or in Indian mythology about the use of *Sidur*; and it was a man-made ritual that the bride should use *Sidur* on the '*Bashi Be-A*'. However, the *Bangal* and *Ghoti* communities in Kolkata observe this marriage ritual in a different manner as explained above.

With reference to Hindu mythology, there is a different interpretation of women putting on '*Sidur*'. Das said:

Once upon a time Hindu women (might be influenced by the power of Hindu Goddesses for example, 'Ma Kali' as symbol of power and strength) were very arrogant, aggressive and uncontrollable. Hence, some strong men attacked them and hit them on their heads and blood oozed out. Consequently, women's aggressions were controlled and they came under the control of men. Since then Hindu married women started to use 'Sidur' instead of blood in

their forehead as signs of respect to their husbands and other men (Interview: 2000).

However, the practices of such differential marriage rituals still exist between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* due to their strong adherence to traditional beliefs and attitudes.

Religious Festivals and Socio-Cultural Differences

The most celebrated Hindu religious festival in Bengal is '*Durga Puja*' (worship to goddess '*Durga*'). Hindus show selfless respect to their goddess '*Mother Durga*' by offering '*Bhog*' (various types of food and fruits) and puja (worship). They believe that '*Ma Durga*'s happiness with '*Bhog*' and puja will bring prosperity in life. A review captioned '*Durga Puja - how mother has changed*' shows that:

"According to recorded history, the first ever Durga Puja, which was a public do, was in Taherpur, in Bangladesh now. The oldest Puja in Calcutta is probably that of the Haldars, reportedly four centuries old and still going strong....After independence Durga became the symbol of popular culture. There were two schools, Bangal Durga, originating in East Bengal and Ghoti Durga, from the West of the border. Despite being a staunch Easterner, I think the Western thing is better"(Ayan13, <http://www.apnaguide.com/review/14917>).

This demonstrates that *Bangals* and *Ghotis* practise their same Hindu religious rituals differently.

Besides differences in matrimonial contracts and family orientations, *Bangal* and *Ghoti* substantially differ in many cultural contexts ranging from '*Shani Puja*' (worship on Saturday to get rid of evils) down to '*Sradhya*' (a Hindu festival followed by a feast in honour of a recently deceased person in the family). Unlike any place in East Bengal, in Kolkata, almost every alternate house has a particular place for '*Shani Puja*' and this *Puja* is being performed mostly by the *Ghotis* every week. In case of '*Sradhya*' the roles of '*Purohits*' and the contents of '*Montra*' are different for both *Bangal* and *Ghoti*, although the scale of differences sometimes varies with regard to caste-status groups. There is even a difference in the menu of the '*Sradhya Anushtthan*' for *Bangal* and *Ghoti*. It implies from such observation that not only the marriage rituals but associated religious and cultural traits also appeared a little different for *Ghoti* and *Bangal* in Kolkata.

Family Structure and Composition

Family is an important social institution in India. The family system in India helps its members to acquire primary knowledge about culture and traditions of Indian society through face-to-face and intimate relationships (Marjoribanks 1979; Narain 1975). In pre-British India, the functions of the family remained as an economic and social unit similar to other pre-industrial societies. At this stage, the family functions as the agency for providing education, welfare of the aged people, care for sick persons and for the performance of religion. It also acts as the productive unit, undertaking collectively various economic activities mainly agriculture that supports all its members (Mandelbaum 1970; Yorburg 2002). The vast Indian rural society is characterised by the existence of joint-family patterns and extended family networks. Such a family type is the composite of father-mother, grandfather, grandmother, sons, daughters, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, their children, and all live together under the same roof and share from the common pool of earnings. Bengal society is similarly characterised by its cementing bond of the Indian joint-family system.

The introduction of employment for wages gives rise to the individual entrepreneurship and hence, the traditional protective character of the joint-family system gradually started to decline. The expansion of urbanisation and industrialisation also contributed to the decline of the joint-family system and its replacement by the nuclear family type constituting husband-wife and their unmarried children only (Khan 2006).

As observed, with the advancement of industrialisation, there has been a relative decline of the joint-family system in India. According to Singh (1976:109) (in India) "...long term genealogical studies of family structure have brought out the evidence that joint-families pass through circular stages from 'jointness' to nuclear family structure and again to family jointness". Although no clear-cut dichotomy has been formed on this concept of 'jointness', there are some similar studies where such idea of 'jointness' and extended family values are revealed.⁸ This analysis of the perception of 'jointness' in family has relevance with regard to the pursuance of joint-family by the EB Hindu refugee-migrants in their resettlement in Kolkata. Despite economic constraints, in general, family is considered as the congenial home environment for a decent living. As a consequence, even today, despite being a highly populated country India has a relatively low rate of divorce in the world (<http://www.indianmirror.com/culture/cul8.html>).

In the process of resettlement, the *Bangals* by and large, retained their family structures as "joint and extended" families. In fact, they initiated and carefully planned to carry on with the joint and extended family values. They intended that they should live in such family types to preserve their social existence. Under nuclear family structure, the family values and practices as observed among the *Ghotis*, for all practical purposes, were not favourable for the migrants' resettlement. Hence, there was a conflict of family values involving the *Bangal* and *Ghoti*.

However, in the course of rapid industrial-urban development, retention of such joint-family structures by EB migrants in Kolkata for more than three decades warrants an analysis. The field observation suggests that the EB Hindu refugee-migrants (*Bangal*) insisted upon building the joint-family structure through the maintenance of communal boundaries and regional identities in contrast to the WB local Hindus (*Ghoti*). They thought, it was imperative to maintain joint-family for their resettlement in the face of problems of social interaction with the *Ghotis*.

Bangals' rationale for sustaining joint and extended family structures was for the maintenance of unity to support their successful resettlement in Kolkata. Also the prevailing *Ghoti* family culture (nuclear family system), as the *Bangal* perceived it, encouraged them to unite through joint-family bonding. The issues of employment/job, income and earnings are related to their basic necessities of life (such as food, clothing and shelter), which they thought, could be achieved through united effort for carrying out business enterprise. At the early stage of settlement, in business, however, they were reluctant to take partnership beyond their own family members and community people. This united family and community enterprise involved very limited or no risk of uncertainty and distrust. Refugee-migrants' believed that to carry on any kind of business with people from outside *Bangal's* own family and community, particularly with the local West Bengalis, could cause a disaster. Although the *Bangal* came in contact with the Kolkata city life, they were virtually unaffected by the city cosmopolitanism because of the nature of their status as refugee migrants. At the initial stage of migration, there was no scope of possible employment for the *Bangal*, which left them in severe economic hardship. There was no viable means to overcome this critical situation than to be involved in any various kinds of small business. In order to carry out such business, it was convenient for the *Bangals* to be in a joint and extended families using the labour of family members only. One of the

⁸ For further analysis of 'jointness' of the family and extended family structure, refer to Desai (1964); Kapadia (1982); Kolenda (1968); Weine *et al.* (2004) and Yorburg (2002).

heads of joint-family from EB Hindu refugee-migrants (Pravash Dey) stated:

Initially we started a small-scale business of selling vegetable in the roadside areas of Jadavpur shopping centre. All male adults of our family involved in this business considering the rate of profit. With the passage of time, we have been able to take a grocery shop and hence we overcome economic crisis to a certain extent. I realised that we achieved such economic solvency (limited though) due to our joint-family unity (Interview: 2001).

Therefore, it is conceivable that the maintenance of the joint and extended families by the EB Hindu refugee-migrants (*Bangals*) were essentially designed to overcome economic crisis and problems of resettlement in an unfamiliar location.

However, the socioeconomic background of *Ghotis* in Kolkata is dissimilar to that of *Bangal's* rural agricultural backgrounds. *Ghotis* have urban backgrounds with the pursuance of non-agricultural occupation for generations. Since the *Ghotis* are exposed to 'Kolkata Culture'⁹ long before the EB Hindus arrival in WB, they acquired a relatively more positive sense of urbanism and industrialism from the cosmopolitan Kolkata city environment. This urbanite *Ghotis* naturally became individualistic in their actions and attitudes with regard to family life. Subsequently, this individualistic nature of the *Ghotis* influenced them to adopt a nuclear family structure. Also *Ghotis'* self-centred way of living motivated them to adopt nuclear family structure. The Kolkata cosmopolitan city has played a great role in creating impersonal relationship among its city dwellers that too favoured the rapid growth of nuclear family patterns.

The direct participant-observation at south Kolkata suggests that there is a high incidence of joint and extended family structures among the EB Hindu refugee-migrants (*Bangal*). Contrarily, most WB local Hindus (*Ghotis*) live in nuclear family structures. Therefore, in matrimonial contracts the *Ghotis* assume nuclear family structures, which is also evident from field observation. As stated earlier that WB local Hindus (*Ghotis*) were less likely to have marriage contracts with EB Hindu refugee-migrants (*Bangal*) because of differences in family structure and preferences in terms of matrimonial contracts. However, in some cases the matrimonial contracts eventuated between them when *Ghoti* could find a bridegroom from the EB Hindu refugee-migrants living outside the joint-family structure. For example,

a *Ghoti* family would prefer a *Bangal* bridegroom who has a good job and lives alone outside Kolkata because, the *Ghoti* family's daughter will not be required to live with the bridegroom's extended family since he works outside Kolkata. The question of self-centred individuality is prominent with the *Ghoti* family values. On the other hand, the *Bangal's* priority in settling matrimonial contracts is for consolidating the economic power and maintaining regional identity. They hardly consider self-centred individuality in matrimonial contracts, because they have not developed such family values while living in the joint and extended family environment. They also emphasised class rather than caste system in family relationship.

(i) Caste and Class Status in Family Relationship

The relationships between family types and class status are significant in the context of Kolkata city environment. As observed, both *Bangal* and *Ghoti* communities maintained different family types and also they have varied class status. Field observation revealed the extent of inclination to caste hierarchies, suggesting that the *Ghotis* emphasised the social significance of caste-order in Hindu society. In this context, they argue that all people cannot belong to higher caste or to lower caste. There should be a gradation of people and a hierarchy of authority. This hierarchy of authority is pre-determined since the basis of Hindu casteism is traced through birthright (higher or lower caste) and maintained for generations. There is no scope for achieving caste status since it is based on ascription only. Over time, politics influences caste system in India and hence Hindus tend to achieve caste status through politics as well. This trend of caste politics has come into being during British rule in India (Bandyopadhyay 1990; Shukla 1987).

It is commonly observed that the caste pride among the *Ghotis* is considered a factor in their matrimonial contracts, traditional business entrepreneurship and for achieving social status in north Kolkata (an area desirable for the aristocrat *Ghotis*). Conversely, the *Bangals* mainly concentrated in the southern part of Kolkata and they are unconcerned with caste hierarchies. Since most of the *Bangals* come from lower caste, therefore, they are less inclined to maintain caste boundaries.

Information gathered from the sample respondents suggest that in West Bengal, particularly in Kolkata, the caste pride and rigid caste stratification have declined to a great extent (at least in the case of matrimonial contracts). However, caste pride is still im-

⁹ As a British presidency city, Kolkata has acquired a metropolitan and multicultural urban environment even before the industrial expansion in Bengal. Though surrounded by vast rural Bengal society, Kolkata has developed a unique culture of its own in regard to language, literature, arts, habits and way of life.

portant in the understanding the caste-based social status and the distinguishing people of different groups, categories and communities. It is evident from the fieldwork that the caste pride has lesser impact on the *Bangals* than the *Ghotis*. By virtue of the caste hierarchy, the *Ghotis* tried to maintain their caste pride. *Ghotis* were more influenced by and exposed to consumerism, and this has impacted on their attitudes towards caste hierarchy with regard to family status compared to *Bangals*. It has relatively no impact on the second-generation of EB Hindu refugee-migrants.

Dynamics of Conformity and Contradictions between Bangals and Ghotis

Over the years the *Bangals* have achieved noticeable economic position in Kolkata despite their adverse circumstances with respect to their class-status based on occupation, education, family background and politics. This progress by *Bangals* was beyond the expectations of the local *Ghotis*. However, in analysing the dynamics of relationships between East Bengal Hindu migrants and West Bengal local Hindus, the necessary information was collected through extensive fieldwork and from secondary sources.

The rural agrarian and semi-urban background of the most East Bengal Hindu migrants and the relatively more urban-industrial background of the majority local West Bengalis make a clear difference in between them both at cultural and attitudinal levels. The *Bangal* group, by and large, maintain their unity in the process of their resettlement in the Udbastu colonies through retaining joint-family, endogamous marriage relationship, kinship ties and linkages. In contrast, the West Bengalis usually tend to maintain nuclear family ties and exogamous marriage relationships (i.e., beyond district identity etc.). Further, the *Ghotis* are inclined to retain caste identities to some extent.

The practice of '*Bangal -Ghoti*' idioms and cultures in relation to family values can be explained in terms of the concepts 'individualism' and 'collectivity' (Hofstede 1984; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Sampson 1991; Triandis 1995;). To compare the assumed family norms of the '*Bangal* and *Ghoti*' communities, elaboration of the concepts of 'individualism' and 'collectivity' would be useful.

The terms 'individualism' and 'collectivity' are used here to compare the characteristic differences between *Bangal* and *Ghoti*, mainly in the context of family types they tend to retain and attitudes they hold within themselves. It can be seen in the earlier section that *Bangals* are more traditional in their attitudes since they are in favour of joint and exten-

ded family systems. To the contrary, *Ghotis* mostly favour nuclear family types and hence it is likely that they bear individualistic attitudes in them. However, it is rather indicative that for all practical purposes (i.e., materialistic viewpoint), the *Bangal* refugee migrants had little option than to unite during their resettlement in Kolkata. Therefore, it is very likely that they tended to act collectively in most matters. *Ghotis* are permanent settlers in West Bengal, so they could afford to act indifferently to the needs of the other community and thus demonstrate individualism in their behaviour. In the pre-partition Bengal, the preponderance of individualistic and collective attitudes within the *Ghotis* and *Bangals* groups had a limited impact on society. But the contemporary trend of individualistic and collective approaches to family and social life between *Bangal* and *Ghoti* formally commenced with the partition of Bengal in 1947. This trend did not, however, remain static for the whole period since the partition of Bengal. It started to change after three decades or so, when the EB Hindu refugee-migrants had been adequately exposed to 'Kolkata Culture' and also been politically assisted.

The social scenario of the East Bengal Hindu migrants have changed at an accelerated pace with their changing status from refugeehood to citizenship which substantially affected the sociocultural and attitudinal levels of both communities. With the passage of time, it is apparent that the symbolic construction of communal boundary between EB migrants and WB local Hindus plays a key role in shaping social reality.

Lepervanche's (1984) illustration may be mentioned here as a theoretical frame of reference. Relevant to resettlement and cultural adjustment to a new socio-political environment de Lepervanche states:

"...in departing from the assimilationist and pluralist models, I intend to explore the relation between legal discrimination and prejudice, on the assumption that Australians are unequal with respect to ownership and control of the means of production and that this basic class cleavage means that the distribution of power is also unequal. Those who have the power to propagate ideas and values subject the less powerful to their cultural constructs" (de Lepervanche 1984: 29).

With regard to distribution of power and authority, legal discrimination, equity issues and cultural constructs, like Indians in White Australia, the unequal relationship is also observed between Hindu refugee *Bangals* and local Hindu *Ghotis*. As for example, the *Bangal* Refugee Hindus took more than a decade to achieve their citizenship and ownership rights in

India. There are many refugee-migrants who are yet to get legal rights. Nonetheless, some *Bangal* acquired a stronghold in politics and gained control over the means of production. In the context of cultural constructs, however, the *Ghoti-Bangal* relationships remain symbolically unequal.

(i) Contradiction

EB migrants' comparatively settled condition weakens their strong determination to the retention of regional identity and communal boundaries. Over and above, the relatively high rate of inter-communal and inter-caste marriages and also because of the

indifference of the second-generation migrants to regional identity and communal boundaries, they have become more symbolic than real in the social and cultural affairs of the state. Also, the relative decline of joint-family has caused negative impact on the retention of East Bengal identity and distinct culture. Therefore, the antagonistic cultural relationship between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* has reduced considerably. However, based on qualitative field observation, Table 4 shows the contrast between EB Hindu refugee-migrants and WB local Hindus in terms of the four major institutions of family, marriage, politics and caste:

Table 4: Contrast between EB Migrants and WB Locals

| | EB migrants ¹ | WB locals |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | <i>Joint family</i> . "We are community-minded and we have ethos of helping our own family members. The WB locals are self-centred. They are more concerned about individuals than community. They have no love for their kins and even for their other family members." | <i>Nuclear</i> . "We are exposed to metropolitan Kolkata culture, and urbanization. We are modern in our outlook for family matters. EB migrants have a rural background and they are traditional, and they are uncultured, too. All these together influenced them to maintain joint family." |
| Marriage | Prefers within their own community people, from the same region, sometimes from the same district of East Bengal. Caste is not an important issue. They are least interested to go for any marriage contracts with the WB locals because they apprehend cultural maladjustment. | Prefers from within West Bengal, not so much so with their own community or same district identity. But they are more inclined to caste hierarchy than the EB migrants. They are not as rigid as the EB migrants in regard to regional identity. If they find it convenient, they will consider marriage deals outside their own community. |
| Politics | "We support the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) because this party helped us rehabilitate in Kolkata, since 1977 when this party assumed political power in WB. Moreover, most members of CPI-M came from East Bengal, some of them were refugee migrants, too." | "We support the Indian National Congress for this party participated in the independence of Hindustan. This party is more nationalistic in approach than the Communist Party, which is more concerned about the EB migrants. We understand that it could be because of their electoral votes from their own regional people." |
| Caste identity | Since most of the EB migrants came from lower caste background, they are not so rigid about the caste hierarchy. Because they are less caste conscious. In fact, only a few high caste people migrated to Kolkata. Even they have no caste prejudice. Therefore, caste hierarchy is unimportant to EB migrants. | They claim to be higher caste and come from aristocratic families. They are more caste conscious compared to the EB migrants. They think the low caste EB migrants culturally polluted the environment of Kolkata to a certain extent. Since the migrants' background is from lower caste, they are least concerned about the caste identity. |

¹ Source: Field-study on Involuntary migration of EB Hindus and their resettlement in Kolkata (2000-2001)

Table 4 shows the contrast between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* in four major institutions of family, marriage, politics and caste. *Bangals* prefer joint-family for their unity and resettlement while *Ghotis* prefer nuclear family judging it to be a modern outlook of life. In the context of marriage, EB Hindus are rigid in terms of regional identity while WB Locals are more flexible. In politics, most WB locals support

the Indian National Congress while the EB Hindus support the Communist Party of India. Caste pride is important to WB locals and it is unimportant to EB Hindus for many of them belong to low caste. This state of contradictory attitudes between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* has lessened over the years and hence they tended to conform to each other's matters of interests.

(ii) Conformity

As discussed above, the contradictory *Ghoti-Bangal* relationship has turned into a symbolic difference between them over the years. In the course of social interaction between two groups, a sense of conformity has also developed. The aspects of conformity between the two groups can be summarised as follows:

- Because of the maturation of the second-generation migrants, the EB migrants and the WB locals conform to each other on many cultural issues, such as marriage contracts and social functions.
- The 'Kolkata Culture' has influenced the EB migrants over the years and hence they are more exposed to an urban way of life.
- Both the EB migrants and the WB locals have changed their attitudes towards each other, after long co-existence. Now, they have compromised on aspects of food habits, clothing, religious rituals, political differences, and family and marriage practices.

The nature of contradiction and conformity between *Bangals* and *Ghotis* in the long resettlement process of the EB Hindu refugee migrants in Kolkata gradually appeared to be more symbolic than real. The change of relationships between the two groups developed since 1977 when the communist party assumed political power in West Bengal that politically favoured the EB Hindus at large.

Summary and Conclusion

After discussing all possible aspects of the EB Hindu migrants' and WB local Hindus' relationships to each other, including regional and cultural boundaries, conformity and contradictions, and sense of their

exclusiveness, it is concluded that the concept of *Ghoti-Bangal* was symbolically constructed by both communities. Initially the differences were real and the WB locals tried to maintain their superiority and the EB migrants maintained their regional boundaries in all possible ways. The EB Hindu migrants thought it convenient to resettle while maintaining a symbolic difference. Contrarily, the WB local Hindus tended to restore their cultural superiority by manifesting symbolic differences with the EB Hindus. However, the observation suggests that over the years their degrees of differences in every manners and attitudes have substantially waned. Despite changing attitudes and approaches, which have developed in dealing with each other over the years, both the EB Hindu refugee-migrants and the WB local Hindus overtly possess an innate tendency of differentiating themselves on matrimonial issues and family values by regional and cultural boundaries.

Bangal and *Ghoti* do practice family and marriage rituals in different manners. The variance in practicing family and marriage rituals in two communities could be ascertained from the fact that the *Ghotis* mostly belong to nuclear families and therefore, they substantially lack the ethos of family values and marriage rituals of joint and extended family structures. The *Bangals* mostly adhered to joint and extended family norms for the whole period of their resettlement process (Khan 2006). In establishing matrimonial contracts, both communities are too rigid in selecting bride and grooms beyond their own cultural boundaries. This scenario of *Bangal* and *Ghoti* addressed a kind of parochial attitude of maintaining their own cultural continuities. Over the years, the attitudinal changes were noticed in both communities consequentially with the maturation of the second-generation of EB Hindu refugee-migrants and the advancement of urban-industrial culture.

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